AUTO-TRAIL
Frontier Mohawk

This high-end motorhome is a blend of the sociable and the functional, and should appeal as a luxury tourer for two

Price £50,836 (£51,735 as tested) **Sleeps** Four **Belts** Two
Base Fiat Ducato **Engine** 2.3-litre Turbo Diesel **L/W/H** 7.5/2.31/3.03m **Economy** 24.8mpg **MTPLM** 4005kg **Payload** 505kg
Water fresh/waste 100/55 litres **Battery** 110Ah **Gas** 2 x 13kg

Auto-Trail 'vans are renowned for being instantly recognisable, and the Frontier Mohawk is no exception. Sporting the Trigano Group's distinctive habitation body design, the Mohawk is essentially the same as the previous Cheyenne 696, but for 2010 it's been repositioned within the high-end Frontier range, and its spec levels have also been improved.

The Mohawk's layout is a blend of the sociable and the functional, with a rear transverse garage double bed and a twin facing settee lounge layout. The utility of the garage has been reduced somewhat in favour of having the bed mounted at a lower and more comfortable height. In our test 'van the Mohawk lacked belted travel seats rear of the cab, and so is more appealing as a spacious luxury tourer for couples.

Our reader tester Sue Pallant took the Mohawk out to Nottinghamshire to see if it would successfully cosset her against the raging gale-force weather outside.

CARAVANGUARD INSURANCE QUOTE £277.75*

SMALL CLEAR SCREEN
The screen for the colour reversing camera might be small, but the resolution is high enough to allow for easy visibility

ACCESSIBLE GAS LOCKER
Not only is it low to the ground and lipless, it has an internal opening catch, too, located behind the passenger cab seat

HIDDEN HOOK-UP POINT
The hook-up point is safely tucked away in a side locker. Sue felt it could use a light, though, for when you're hooking up after dark

SETTING A PRECEDENT
Auto-Trail now provides an 85W solar panel as standard with the Frontier Mohawk, so you can stay off hook-up for longer

DESIGN
★★★★☆

As with all Auto-Trails the Mohawk looks solid but elegant, and the new graphics, decals and badges give the exterior a modern lift. It's a pity that our test 'van didn't come with the Platinum Pack, which for £599 gives you a rather fetching silver cab paintjob. The rear wall carries the easily accessible spare wheel, a lockable, colour coded roof access ladder and also boasts newly styled rear lights.

All Frontier models are now supplied with a roof mounted 85W solar panel as standard, in response to the growing demand for greener systems.

"The middling overhang of 2.4 metres is crying out for corner steadies," noted Sue, "especially in blustery winter weather.

"I really liked the gas locker, though, which is 37cm from the ground, has no lip to negotiate and has an opening catch located within the 'van," she continued. She liked the external gas barbecue point as well – it's conveniently placed for access to the internal kitchen.

Our tester

Sue Pallant is a member of our reader team. She lives in Nottinghamshire with her partner Ian Barlow and they tour in their four-wheel drive 1993 Renault Dodge S46 – a former electricity board vehicle that they converted themselves in 2000.

We stayed at...

Teversal Camping and Caravanning Club Site Nottinghamshire NG17 3JJ
Tel 01623 551 838
Situated a short distance from both the M1 and the A38, Teversal's award-winning C&CC site is perfectly placed for exploring the surrounding counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The site has 126 pitches, the majority hardstanding and all with hook-up.

*FOR INSURANCE QUOTES TERMS AND CONDITIONS SEE PAGE 130

SPARE WHEEL HOUSING
This superb-looking spare wheel housing is an Auto-Trail trademark. It's an excellent feature, both attractive and practical

EXTERIOR SHOWER POINT
Located just ahead of one of the garage doors, the hot/cold shower point makes it easy to clean dirty walking equipment and the like

SPACIOUS GARAGE
It's not the best option for bicycles (you'll have to take them apart) but the Mohawk's lit garage is roomy enough for most items

STANDARD-ISSUE LADDER
A thoughtful addition, although it conspires with the spare wheel cover to make fitting a bicycle rack near-impossible

LIVE-IN TEST

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"The electric hook-up point is cleverly located in an offside locker, which ensures it won't be a hazard on site when using the habitation door," Sue pointed out.

The internal décor creates what Sue referred to as an air of "understated elegance", with granite-effect worktops and a pleasant combination of upholstery and wood tones.

ON THE ROAD

"It was unfortunate," said Sue, "that I chose the week of the once-in-1000-year storms to test the 'van." Near gale force winds buffeted the vehicle as Sue headed away from Auto-Trail's east coast factory.

> The electric hook-up point is cleverly located in an offside locker

"The 130bhp engine was perfectly adequate to propel the 'van's 7.5 metre length," she said. "But the optional upgrade to the 157bhp unit would provide that satisfying extra bit of 'oomph' on long hills or when overtaking."

Although road handling and manoeuvring were generally very good, our tester was surprised by the rather unpleasant rumbling noises on some road surfaces.

"However, once I'd rescued the free range grill pan there were no detectable on-board rattles," she noted.

The cab is well-equipped, with cruise control, twin airbags, adjustable swivel seats with armrests, electric windows and mirrors, and pleated blinds to all windows as standard. Visibility to the wing mirrors is improved thanks to the single cassette housing for the cab blinds, which results in a narrower pillar between the side windows.

LOUNGING & DINING

The centrally placed nearside habitation door effectively subdivides the 'van and is enhanced by an illuminated step, a grab rail and a three-quarter length mirror. In the living/dining area two longitudinal, dense foam bench seats face each other and offer ample seating for four – Sue's verdict was that they "ooze comfort".

There's a small, adjustable circular table with a detachable boom leg next to the passenger seat, which Sue found created more problems than solutions.

"When you remove it there isn't really any designated spot to store it, and when its in place the leg obstructs access to the power socket at the end of the lounge settee."

She liked the sturdy, sizeable (95 x 58cm) freestanding lounge table, which has a very tight fitting designated storage spot in the bedroom. It dominates the space between the bench seats but offers plenty of room for plates and the like.

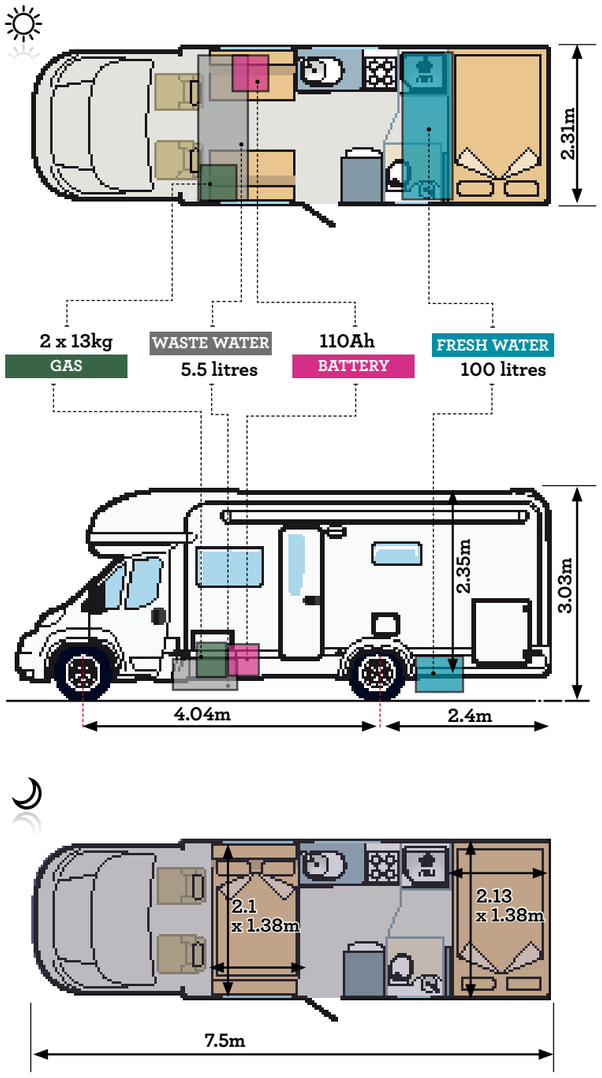
Although both cab seats swivel Sue found that there isn't really enough legroom for them to be used simultaneously. "I had to lower the steering wheel to gain enough space for the driver's seat to turn," she remarked. "Once swivelled, I couldn't persuade either seat to lock into place, resulting in irritating swivelling."

Sue loved the excellent ceiling-mounted fold-down LCD TV/entertainment unit (part of the Media pack), which is best viewed from the facing sofas.

Two good sized windows combine with an opening rooflight to provide abundant natural light and at dusk there's a plethora of mood lighting available from a combination of dimmable LED strips, directional spots and discreet uplighting.

"I found the under-locker strip lights rather glaring even when dimmed and would

Dimensions



History

From fairly humble beginnings over 25 years ago Auto-Trail has developed into one of the country's favourite manufacturers and, despite its incorporation into the gigantic European Trigano group, it remains quintessentially British. Famous for pioneering features such as acrylic double glazing and swivel cab seats – which have gone on to become standard motorhome equipment – Auto-Trail continues to offer its customers the benefits of new technology.

In 2008 Auto-Trail made a concerted attack on the entry-level low-profile end of the market with the launch of the Excel brand. This year, they have consolidated their model ranges, discontinuing the Cheyenne range, and transplanting a number of layouts into the Frontier range.

ILUMINATED SCRIPT
Frontier models now feature this stylised entrance light, which is a very pleasing design touch, and is very useful as well

CUTLERY PARTITIONS
The classy wooden cutlery drawer included with the Mohawk is much more appealing than off-the-shelf plastic examples

KITCHEN DOWN-LIGHTING
The bottom edge of the kitchen counter is fitted with lights, which our tester found to be too glaring compared to the rest of the 'van

FULLY FITTED MICROWAVE
The Daewoo 700W microwave oven lives in an eye-level cupboard – not the ideal location but it's still a very useful piece of kit

CONSUMMATE COMFORT
The Mohawk has a cossetting 2.13 x 1.38m (6'11" x 4'6") rear double bed, which our tester adored. It's low enough to get into without a ladder

BUILT-IN WIRE RACKS
The wire racking is a thoughtful touch, but its positioning means it intrudes on cupboard space when the cupboard is shut

GRANITE-EFFECT COVER
The sink covers help increase workspace but are quite hefty and don't have any dedicated storage space when they're removed

SEPARATE TOILET CUBICLE
The dedicated toilet area is a good idea in theory, but in practice it's short on legroom and its limited headroom makes using it awkward

ROOMY SHOWER
The shower cubicle is spacious, and the shower head is mounted high enough for six footers to use it in comfort

LIVE-IN TEST

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prefer them shielded better from the eye," said Sue. A courtesy light is nicely incorporated into the hanging rail in the full-length wardrobe, switching on automatically when the left-hand door is opened. Overall, our tester found that the white LED lighting in the Mohawk was a little glaring and didn't mix well with the warm lighting elsewhere in the 'van.

KITCHEN

★★★★☆

Almost everything is provided in the compact galley. Set

"Two good sized windows and an opening rooflight provide abundant natural light"

in the granite-effect, heat resistant worktop is a good-sized stainless steel sink with a domestic-style mixer tap. It has a small draining area and two nicely sculpted covers, which can be used to extend the 35cm worktop area to 100cm in length.

The glass-lidded dual fuel hob is full-featured, with three electronically ignited gas burners and one 230V electric plate, plus a gas grill and separate oven.

Although there's a sliding window and a 12V roof fan/ventilator close to the cooker, she found that they were not practical to use during torrential rain so the lack of alternative extraction could be a problem at times.

Above the sink a slightly projecting cupboard with a silver tambour door houses a fitted 700W microwave oven. "I'm not convinced by the safety of its high position," noted Sue. "But I found it very useable, exercising appropriate care."

Beneath the sink, the 97-litre three-way Thetford fridge with small freezer compartment has a positive catch, which Sue loved. She also liked the fact that it opens into the entrance area, making it easy to fill and clean.

The kitchen has striking under-counter lighting, which, in Sue's words "add a bit of bling but create quite a lot of reflected dazzle."

WASHROOM

★★★★☆

The Mohawk has two separate washing areas. Offside there's a shower cubicle with seamless walls, an adjustable shower head, a strong hanging rail, single drain hole and a frosted glass, bi-fold door.

On the nearside a circular Thetford swivel toilet is joined by the oddly shaped, narrow washbasin, which our tester found impossible to use without soaking everything around it. There's a well-lit mirror, floor and wall cupboards with plentiful racks for toiletries and a full complement of quality furnishings – loo roll and toothbrush mug holders, towel rail and clothes hooks – although Sue did think it a shame that there's no shaver socket. In addition to the small clear glass window there's also a huge opening rooflight ensuring more than adequate ventilation.

The door to the toilet cubicle cleverly closes onto the forward area of the 'van creating an en suite washroom for the rear bed area. "When the door swings open it has to negotiate a ceiling light so there's an 8.5cm gap at the top when in en suite set-up," Sue pointed out. "So it doesn't afford complete privacy if using the toilet. When used simply as a toilet room, bending over the basin results in an attack from the prominent door handle and the toilet has to be swivelled to allow any knee room."

SLEEPING

★★★★☆

One of the main reasons for buying this vehicle will be the

+ LIKES

FRESHWATER DRAIN VALVE
The drain valve is easy to use. "It makes draining down for winter very simple," Sue told us. "No need to mess about with your hand in the water tank searching for the plug here."

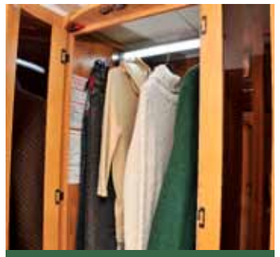
DIMMABLE LIGHTING
"The dimmable lighting really helps to create a nice ambience," said Sue. "Although it's spoilt to a certain degree by some of the LED lighting, which is too cold and glaring."

AL FRESCO COOKING
The external barbecue point is a useful addition for sunny days on site. "Thanks to the big garage you'll have ample storage for your barbecue and all the attendant kit as well," Sue noted.

– DISLIKES

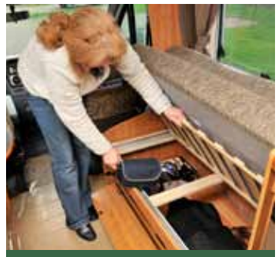
INCONVENIENT VENTILATION IN THE SHOWER STALL
Ventilation in the washroom is provided by an opening roof light, which Sue found awkward to operate. "You have to remove the hanging rail, as it impedes the drop down insect screen and leaves a very restricted gap through which to reach the opening handles. But if you have anything hung up there, this becomes a very tedious procedure and I suspect you will soon stop using that hanging rail altogether."

FRIDGE DOOR CATCH
The Thetford fridge has a positive catch, which means it won't open when you go around a corner and spill out all your food



SPACIOUS, LIT WARDROBE
The wardrobe is tall enough for most items and is located right above the heater – the LED lighting is a bit harsh, though

SECURED CROCKERY
The Mohawk's kitchen has ample storage, and this locker will keep your crockery in place when you're on the move



UNDER-SEAT STORAGE
The side-facing benches in the lounge have storage beneath them, accessible by lifting the cushion or via a hatch in the seat base

AMPLE LOUNGE SPACE
The swivelling cab seats might be next to useless for lounging, but the two facing sofas provide more than ample space for up to four to lounge and dine

FUSS-FREE LOUNGE BED
The lounge bed is comfortable and easy to make up – just slide out the slatted bases and drop in the sofa cushions

IMPRACTICAL HANDLES
The handles on the access hatch to the garage might look attractive, but they snag on clothing and threaten the lower legs

HANDY SWEEPER
Auto-Trail now thoughtfully includes an electronic sweeper with its 'vans – a little vaccum cleaner, essentially – as standard

POOR SWIVELING SEATS
The cab seats swivel – with much difficulty – but they don't swivel all the way around and don't provide much knee room either

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fixed, transverse rear bed. "I've never slept in more comfort in a 'van," enthused Sue. "Nor in many luxury hotels, come to think of it."

Two six inch deep mattresses are placed over a slatted base to provide a generous (2.13 x 1.38m) sleeping space. One problem Sue found with the mattresses is that they are so snug fitting that it can be difficult to tuck in a base sheet without breaking every fingernail or scratching the walls.

There's a good-sized window in the bed area for sunrises and a large opening

"I've never slept in more comfort in a motorhome," enthused our tester Sue

rooflight as well. A privacy curtain is available for when guests are using the other bed. Individually switched reading lights, a combination of lockers and easily accessible shelves plus a dedicated flat screen TV mount (TV not provided) at the foot of the bed are the final flourishes.

"It seems churlish to grumble in the face of such luxury but I do have one teeny niggle," Sue said. "The garage can be accessed internally via a double-doored hatch below the bed, its slim door handles are placed a few inches below the edge of the bed and I was sent flying when my pyjama leg caught on the end of one of them as I got out of bed. Although not as aesthetically pleasing, I'd have to swap them for lockable button catches."

A second very comfortable double bed measuring 2.10 x 1.24m appears in seconds at the front of the 'van by sliding the bench seat bases together, adjusting the leg securing screws and re-arranging the four cushions.

STORAGE

Many buyers will also be attracted by the Mohawk's garage, which Sue found to be "excellent". It can be accessed from either side of the 'van via generously-sized doors (74.5 x 85cm) and there's a manually switched LED strip light on either side as well. The garage has chequerplate effect flooring, plenty of tie downs and hanging storage pockets. The available storage weight for the garage is 150kg, allowing for loads of sports kit, leisure furniture or shopping.

On the offside, a 110cm-long locker, which also houses the hook up point, is perfect for storing cables and muddy levellers, which can be washed down with the practical external shower connector placed close by. There's a small compartment housing the 110Ah leisure battery with space for another if required.

Inside, the 'van's roomy overhead cupboards offer a nice mix of storage options and are fitted with anti-rattle strips.

There's good storage space under the lounge seating, with top or side access, although the space beneath the nearside bench contains the gas bottle locker and some air ducting, limiting its use to smaller items. Our test 'van was the lo-line model, which has capacious cupboard space over the cab, and a nice wide ledge to place small items such as keys and glasses.

EQUIPMENT

Truma provides the efficient gas/electric hot water and heating systems, which are supplemented with well-placed blown air ducts.

"The level of bathroom and kitchen fittings is excellent," said Sue, "I can only fault the lack of an extractor unit over the cooker. Overall, this is a very well-equipped 'van – the solar panel is a welcome addition to the standard equipment, and I was really impressed with the optional Media Pack system."

TECHNICAL DATA

BASE VEHICLE
Chassis Fiat Ducato **Engine** 2.3-litre turbo diesel **Power** 130bhp @ 3600rpm **Torque** 236 lb/ft @ 2000rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual **Features** Driver and passenger airbags. ABS. Remote central locking. Electric windows and mirrors. Radio/CD Player. Alloy wheels. Cab air-conditioning. Cruise control.

CARAVAN BODY
Insulation (floor/walls/roof) 45 x 40 x 40mm **Skin** GRP smooth aluminium walls and roof. Acrylic-capped ABS side skirts. High gloss GRP walls and roof. Impervious road facing underfloor protection. Colour-coded rear ladder. External hot and cold shower point. External gas BBQ point. Nearside habitation door.

LOUNGING AND DINING
Furniture Acer solid plywood. Hardwood-edged heat-resistant granite effect worktops. **Table** 95 x 58cm **Layout** Rear transverse double bed. Front facing-sofa lounge with freestanding table. Midships kitchen. Full-width washroom. Nearside wardrobe. **Seats** Six **Dining** Four

KITCHEN
Sink Stainless steel with drainer heat-resistant covers. **Cooker** Three-burner gas hob with electric hotplate. Separate oven and grill units. **Fridge** 97-litre fridge with freezer compartment. Fitted Daewoo 700W microwave.

WASHROOM
Toilet Thetford swiveling toilet with electric flush. **Shower** Dedicated shower cubicle.

SLEEPING
Lounge double: 2.10 x 1.24m Rear double: 2.13 x 1.38m

EQUIPMENT
Water and space heater Truma Combi gas/electric blown air heating and water heating **Leisure battery** 110Ah **Gas** 2 x 13kg **Lighting** LED and halogen lighting throughout. Wardrobe lighting. Reading lights over bed and cab area. **Sockets** 3 x 230V; 1 x 12V

OPTIONS
157bhp 3.0-litre turbo diesel engine upgrade (£1771). Rear corner steadies (£140). Frontier Media pack (£899). Frontier Platinum pack (£599).

THE VERDICT

Our tester called the Mohawk: "Another example of Auto-Trail's superbly crafted, sensibly priced motorhomes," and was struck by how many carefully considered construction ideas she came across.

It is aimed primarily at couples rather than families, but the alternative lounge arrangement with two extra belted seats means that it will work for small families, too. It will be perfect for those looking for a high level of comfort with the ability to carry enough kit to tour for long periods at anytime of year, thanks to its high payload and generous storage provisions.

Lounging for four is comfortable, sleeping arrangements are excellent and the Mohawk's kitchen is well equipped enough to please even the most exacting cook. Overall, the improved specification and interior design serve as bonuses on top of a motorhome that already scores high for its fundamentals.

DESIGN	★★★★★
ON THE ROAD	★★★★★
LOUNGE & DINING	★★★★★
KITCHEN	★★★★★
WASHROOM	★★★★★
SLEEPING	★★★★★
STORAGE	★★★★★
EQUIPMENT	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

LONG-TERM TESTER NOTES

ROB GANLEY
"Auto-Trail's various options packs are so good that you really shouldn't think of them as options – they're very competitively priced and include masses of kit, which will help keep residual values high."

SARAH WAKELY
"Auto-Trail motorhomes are always excellent, great to drive and well-mannered on the road. I'm amazed at how few rattles and squeaks their 'vans exhibit, and the Mohawk is no exception."

JEREMIAH MAHADEVAN
"I would have welcomed bigger changes for 2010 – that habitation body is getting a bit long in the tooth – but the Mohawk is fresh both inside and out, and you can't argue with the levels of kit."

OR YOU COULD TRY...

EXCEL BY AUTO-TRAIL 640G
£38,270
★★★★★
If your budget won't stretch to cover the Frontier Mohawk, you can still have an Auto-Trail designed and built version of this layout, in a much more compact form in the Excel. Sure, there are a few compromises and it's not as plush as the Frontier, but we have been consistently impressed by the Excel range for delivering where it counts.

RAPIDO 7083
£56,900
★★★★★
Rapido's traditional design makes it very comparable to Auto-Trails, and elegance is very much the name of the game with these two makes. The 7083 comes on an AL-KO chassis, which gives it an edge over the Mohawk, although its lounge arrangement isn't identical – for that you want the 7096+, which was discontinued this year.

PILOTE P732LGE
£62,315
★★★★★
Pilote eschews the facing-sofa lounge layout in favour of an L-shaped seating unit with a side-facing seat, creating a circular lounge which doesn't work as well in nightime sleeping mode. However, we do like the modern and bold styling that has become synonymous with Pilotes. The price has taken a battering from recent exchange rate travails, though.